

I would like to express my opposition to the FCC's proposed relaxing of the media ownership rules under consideration and up for a vote on June 2 (Docket 02-227 ; Broadcast Ownership). I believe that public policy should limit cable and broadcast companies to no more than 1/3 of the nation and ban cross-ownership between broadcast and newspapers in the same market. The ban on cable television operators owning broadcast stations in the same market should be reinstated. I believe the main harm of these loosened rules will lead to a reduction, if not loss in competition and diversity of editorial points of view, particularly in cities where only one newspaper or broadcast television currently exists. Though the FCC is asserting this to be in the public's best interest, I fail to see how consolidated media companies will have any incentive to provide diverse formats, programs, and content for local markets. Instead, corporations will grow more powerful and cross-media mergers between local broadcast and newspaper outlets will result in raised prices, lower quality and reduced diversity. The mass media, particularly broadcast television, are the primary means through which citizens gather news and information and ultimately, they are still one of the only outlets for the public to express their opinions.

Most importantly, media concentration would diminish the ability of the news media to engage in its critical "watchdog" role over private and public interests ; so vital to democracy. The media should encourage expression and be responsive to the people and local communities they serve ; and not just their corporate bottom line. Without independent owners, the media is also at risk of self-censoring themselves to protect their corporate interests by refusing to discuss/print anything having negative impact on advertisers or on the company itself. Too few companies controlling the flow of news, information, and even entertainment is unhealthy in a democratic nation such as ours and I oppose the FCC's proposed relaxing of the media ownership rules under consideration.